

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A process for producing an aliphatic polyester, comprising: subjecting a cyclic ester containing water in excess of 80 ppm which functions as an initiator or/and a molecular weight-adjusting agent to ring-opening polymerization ~~based on~~ while controlling a total ~~proton~~-concentration of proton-sources including water and proton-source impurities in the cyclic ester ~~as an index~~ so as to provide a desired weight-average molecular weight of resultant aliphatic polyester by varying the content of the water in the cyclic ester, and compounding ~~a~~ the resultant aliphatic polyester with a carboxyl group-capping agent.
2. (Original) A production process according to Claim 1, wherein the carboxyl group-capping agent is selected from the group consisting of monocarbodiimides, polycarbodiimides, oxazolines, oxazines and epoxy compounds.
3. (Original) A production process according to Claim 1, wherein the carboxyl group-capping agent is a monocarbodiimide.
4. (Currently amended) A production process according to Claim 1, wherein ~~a~~ the total ~~proton~~-concentration of proton-sources including more than 80 ppm of water is adjusted by adding water to a purified cyclic ester containing at most 60 ppm of water.
5. (Currently amended) A production process according to Claim 1, wherein the total ~~proton~~-concentration of proton-sources in the cyclic ester is calculated based on a total of hydroxycarboxylic acid compounds and water contained as impurities in the cyclic ester.
6. (Original) A production process according to Claim 5, wherein the hydroxycarboxylic acids comprise an α -hydroxycarboxylic acid and linear oligomer of α -hydroxycarboxylic acid.

7. (Currently amended) A production process according to Claim 1, wherein the total ~~proton~~-concentration of proton-sources in the cyclic ester is adjusted in a range of above 0.09 mol% and below 2.0 mol%.
8. (Currently amended) A production process according to Claim 1, wherein the cyclic ester comprises glycolide alone or a mixture of at least 60 wt.% of glycolide and at most 40 wt.% another cyclic monomer ~~capable of~~ copolymerizable with glycolide by ring-opening copolymerization with glycolide polymerization.
9. (Currently amended) A production process according to Claim 1, wherein the cyclic ester after adjusting the total ~~proton~~-concentration of proton-sources therein is melted under heating in the presence of a catalyst and then the molten cyclic ester is subjected to ring-opening polymerization to precipitate a resultant polymer.
10. (Currently amended) A production process according to Claim 9, wherein the cyclic ester after adjusting the total ~~proton~~-concentration of proton-sources therein is melted under heating in the presence of a catalyst, then the molten cyclic ester is transferred to a polymerization apparatus equipped with a plurality of tubes, and the cyclic ester is subjected to ring-opening polymerization in an air-tight state within each tube.
11. (Original) A production process according to Claim 10, wherein the plurality of tubes comprise tubes having both ends that can be open and closed.
12. (Currently amended) A production process according to Claim 9, wherein the cyclic ester after adjusting the total ~~proton~~-concentration of proton-sources therein is melted under heating in the presence of a catalyst in a melting vessel, then the molten cyclic ester is subjected to ring-opening polymerization in a reaction vessel equipped with a stirrer, and then a resultant polymer is once cooled to be solidified and subject to solid phase polymerization below the melting point of the polymer.